Process. He also conveyed Israel's condemnation to 13 December attack on the Indian Parliament.

Delay in SAARC Conference

†2709. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that 'SAARC Conference organised in Kathmandu began one day after its scheduled time;

(b) if so, the reason therefor; and

(c) Government's reaction in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir; because of the late arrival of one participating Head of State.

(b) India agreed to the new timing for the Inaugural Session as proposed by Nepal, the host government.

Indo-China bilateral relations

2710. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether China has decided to accord high priority to develop and strengthen its relations with India on bilateral basis;

(b) if so, whether addressing a press conference on the 8th February, 2002, the Chinese envoy has pointed out that the Prime Minister of China had recently visited India with the objective of setting new directions for strengthening bilateral relations was satisfied with the outcome of the discussion with the Prime Minister;

(c) whether this is a welcome measure; and

(d) if so, to what extent relations between the two countries have further improved?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.